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Unknown to Bill and Betty, 15 February 1963

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Graduate 16, University, Miss.
February 15, 1963

Dear Bill and Betty:

Yesterday, it being Valentine's Day, I helped make a little Mississippi history by asking Jim Meredith to play golf with me. He said that he had been hoping to get in a game or two but his clubs were in Jackson, etc., etc. Anyway, he agreed to meet me at the office at 1:30 and in the meantime I had asked Cliff McKay and Russell Barrett. Only McKay showed up, with Meredith, and we dropped by the club house to talk with June Lovelady who was damned nice to Black Jim. Instead of paying the fifty cent fee Meredith signed up for five bucks worth of playing, suggesting that he would have to come at least nine times more to get his money's worth. I'm sure that he intends doing just that. As we teed off it was apparent that we had plenty of company, with marshals all over the place, Chief Tatum in a University car up by the Veterans apartments, and a jeep load of soliders off towards the cemetery. It was cold and windy and we had to wait a good while before each shot. Meredith is apparently a good golfer but completely out of practice. It seems that he played a lot in Japan. As you know he is a slight person, probably weighing no more than 140 but he has a good golf swing and, God knows, is the most relaxed person I ever saw. He dubbed a good many of his shots, rather topped them because he was trying to play in mid-season form. He did get away a few awfully good shots, particularly his drives on the 5th and 6th holes. We didn't keep score. McKay was in better form than usual and I was in the middle. In spite of the fact that it was cold and drill day for the various service units on the campus, there must have been forty people playing on the course. I was a little apprehensive each time we caught up with some golfers or they caught up with us. Actually, the golfers couldn't have acted better. They were exactly over-friendly in their relation to Meredith but neither were they nasty, as I had thought some of them might be. Even with this apparent almost-good will, it was something of a trying experience for me because I was alawys anticipating trouble which never really came. Standing around was a chore, too. When we got to the second tee it was most apparent that we were being watched by a lot of people, including a couple in an army helicopter. The walkie-talkies used by the marshals and the military weren't exactly condusive to good golf shots. On the second I went into the ditch with my second shot, then played up near the green and then pitched in for a par (one of two for me). This was the highlight for me. Jim kept getting a little more sure of himself and came through with some good shots besides those off the tees. At the third green and near the fourth tee there was something of a small crowd, over by the apartments, and we could hear occasional loud laughter as though someone were indulging in wise cracks. But no one came near us, at least not hear enough so that we could hear them. With the cold and the crowded course, it took us two and a half hours to play seven holes. That part was rather dreary and there were times when, ordinarily, I would have quit and gone back to the club house. But we kept at it and eventually got through. On the 6th someone mentioned that this was our ~~separate~~ "separate but equal" hole inasmuch as there are two flags on the green because we now have to double back since the course has been torn up. We didn't do the doubling back. I was relieved to get back to the warmth of the house and to a cup of coffee in the grill. This was longer than I had been out in months and I was just damned tired. A lot of it was nervous exhaustion which seemed to hit me but not the others. Black Jim was relaxed all the way and we joked and had an all-round good time, in spite of the tension that I was more aware of than anyone else. How this guy keeps up his spirit, having to put up with constant surveillance 24 hours a day, and putting up with the rest of the human race, is beyond my comprehension. I'm sure that I'll play golf some more with Meredith but I doubt whether I'll ever do so with relaxation - not in Mississippi, that is. Anyway, we made it, apparently without incident. -- Monday I'm going down to Jackson to have dinner with Rabbi Nussbaum and to talk with a half dozen Jacksonians about why Mississippians behave as they do.